

JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Conway

MIDDLE SCHOOL

Student-Led
Conferences

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"As a teacher, I have often struggled with these questions: How can I make my students more accountable for the work that they do in my classroom? How can I make them responsible for the choices they make? As a result of the student-led conferences, my students are accepting responsibility for the quality of work that they are doing and have done in my classroom. This is a major accomplishment, but more important, the students now want to be responsible for their own success!"

—K. Broussard, Teacher—Grade Seven

"I think student-led conferences are good, 'cause we get to show our parents what we've been doing. Usually it's parents and teachers doing all the talking, and we don't get a chance to tell what's going on."

—Evan S., Student—Grade Seven

"Student-led conferences are a team effort. They can be time-consuming, but the results are worth it. I was amazed at how well my students did during student-led conferences. I found out they really were learning in my class."

—M. Newby, ECE Teacher

"We showed our parents what we've been working on. The hardest part was showing our grade sheet 'cause it could've been bad."

—Madelon P., Student—Grade Six

"The key to a successful student-led conference is an organized student. The skills that a student learns in preparing an entire grading period for the conference are as important as the conference itself."

—H. Knott, Humanities Teacher

"It is a chance for you to catch your parents up on what you're doing in school. Instead of the teacher telling what you did, you get to."

—Richard L., Student—Grade Eight

"I like telling my parents what I did so I can have my say in it. The worst part was showing my parents my report card."

—Erica L., Student—Grade Seven

"The hardest part was trying to go through everything you did and remember all the Standards. It's fun, but there's a lot of work to do it."

—Sabra G., Student—Grade Six

Student-Led Conferences

“Student-led conferences have transferred the responsibility of maintaining quality work from the teacher to the student. It’s the first time I’ve seen students publicly present, explain, and take responsibility for their own work, or lack of work.”

—T. Titus, Teacher—Grade Six

“The student-led conference is the ultimate tool to find out what my child is achieving in the classroom—the good as well as the bad.”

—M. Kennison, Parent

“At student-led conferences, you talk to your parents about all your work and grades and how to make them better. I think they’re a lot better than having your teacher do all the talking.”

—Steven R., Student—Grade Eight

2 Conway Middle School Student-Led Conferences

Purpose

Student-led conferences spotlight the most important person in the process (the student); improve parent involvement; and bring students to the point where they ask their teachers, “How can I make my work better?” Student-led conferences put the students in charge, holding them responsible and accountable as they present their work to their parents. This type of conference is a natural progression in the quest for a Standards-based school.

After much study and discussion, Conway Middle School decided that student-led conferences would be implemented as the next step in linking parents, students, and the school. For the student, this type of conference is the ultimate performance event.

Preparation

Early and varied communication and planning are important for successful participation in the student-led conferences. Begin mailings to parents during the summer, before the start of the school year. In addition, give information in newsletters, in school announcements and telecasts, and during New-Student Orientation, Open House, and PTA meetings. Convey to parents and students that participation in student-led conferences is expected of all students and their parents.

Teachers should be involved with and informed of preparations and time lines. They must work with students from the beginning of the school year to prepare them for their student-led conferences. Discussion, role-play, and viewing videotaped conferences are all recommended tools to use with students.

Organization is extremely important in preparing for the conferences—both for teachers and students. Students should keep their schoolwork in organized folders or binders, one for each subject. Students also are required to complete a Self-Evaluation Form prior to the conference. On the form, students list each of their subjects, along with an explanation of how they feel they are progressing in each class and/or their opinion of the class. The explanations can be basic or detailed, but it is important that it be the students' views. They will then complete the section for their goals for the coming grading period. Each student will have a separate, student-led conference folder that will include the Self-Evaluation Sheet; Grade/Evaluation sheets (completed by their teachers for each subject); a piece of schoolwork selected by the student to share during the conference; and his/her *Agenda*.

Teachers must maintain folders, also, to include all major assignments with rubrics. It also is recommended that they have a benchmark piece to share with the parents, if needed. Prior to the conference, teachers must prepare a Grade Sheet or must complete the Teacher Evaluation Checklist for each student, to be included in the student's folder.

It is necessary to eliminate any barriers preventing parents from attending the student-led conference. Transportation, child care, and flexible conference times are all valid concerns for parents. For those parents needing transportation, schedule a bus to stop at designated locations on the day of the conference, or make TARC bus tickets available. Utilize parent volunteers and high school Beta Club students to provide child care for young siblings. This also will provide the high school students with credit for required service-learning hours. Also, develop a conference schedule that allows parents to conference in the morning or evening hours, if needed.

When everyone is prepared, the student-led conference can be a meaningful dialogue between the student and his/her parent, resulting in an increased awareness for the parent of the academic expectations for his/her child and the level of progress that the student has attained. The student will be more confident in what he or she knows and is expected to know. Well-planned preparation also encourages students to be better organized. While completing the Self-Evaluation forms, students are required to thoughtfully take a look at their performance in each of their classes and to set goals for self-improvement.

The Conference

The student is the presenter. The student begins the conference by opening the Agenda and sharing his or her success with Performance Standards for that grade level. The student also shares a piece of work he/she has chosen and explains its rubric.

The parent is the audience. The parent asks probing questions of the student to get at Standards and quality student work.

The teacher is the timekeeper and facilitator. During the first half of the conference, the teacher observes and encourages the student to keep focused on the conference checklist, if necessary. During the last half of the conference, the teacher shares grade information and clarifies the parent's questions.

Once the student-led conferences are completed in the classroom, the parents are directed to the cafeteria to review all their child's work at their leisure. All major assignments and unit tests should be included, along with rubrics. Certain projects can take the form of photographs, cassette tapes, etc.

While in the cafeteria, parents may talk with the guidance counselors and Youth Services Center staff; obtain information on various activities, i.e., tutoring and support networks; or enroll students in Extended School Services (ESS).

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Students

The Purpose of the Student-Led Conference

The purpose of student-led conferences is to provide you with the opportunity to share with your parents what you are learning in school. It also provides you the opportunity to share with your parents your educational goals and a piece of your work that makes you especially proud.

Steps to Student-Led Conferences/Student Responsibilities:

- Throughout the school year, keep your work and assignments organized in folders or binders.
- Be sure to complete the Student Self-Evaluation Conference Form.
- Turn your Conference Form in to your classroom teacher.
- Make sure you receive a confirmation time from your teacher, and give it to your parent.
- On the day before the conference, make sure your folders and notebooks are in order. All materials and your Agenda should be placed on your desk in homeroom before you leave school.
- Make sure you have chosen a piece of work to share with your parents.
- Think about areas in which you need to improve and areas in which you excel. Be prepared to share this information with your parents.
- Come to the conference with your parents.
- Use the Student Checklist to help guide you through your student-led conference. Be sure to check off each item as you complete it.
- After your student-led conference, take your parent to the cafeteria to visit with the counselors or to review other work in your notebooks and folders.

After the Conference:

- What could I do to improve my student-led conference?
- Am I doing the best I can in all my classes?
- Do I need to attend Extended School Services (ESS) to raise a grade or to work on a skill?
- Am I using my Agenda effectively?

Parents

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What to Expect at Student-Led Conferences:

- At a student-led conference, your child does most of the talking.
- Your child will tell you the Performance Standards he or she is working on in class.
- Your child will discuss with you his or her progress in each class.
- Your child will discuss with you his or her improvement plan for the upcoming grading period.
- After your child has finished, he or she will turn the meeting over to you and the teacher for any further questions that need to be answered.

Things to Do Before the Conference:

- Make sure the teacher has sent you a Confirmation Form. If you have not heard from the teacher, be sure to contact him/her 24 hours before the conference.
- Arrange for a baby-sitter for younger siblings or sign up for child care with the school.
- Make a list of questions and concerns.
- Review the Parent Checklist for Student-Led Conferences that you will receive. It lists steps to follow for a productive and meaningful conference.

On Conference Day:

- Make sure your child comes with you to the conference.
- Arrive on time.
- Take notes during the conference.
- Ask for clarification on things you do not understand.
- If you cannot make the scheduled conference time, please call to reschedule.

After the Conference:

- If you still have questions and concerns, set up an appointment to meet with the teacher on another date.
- Fill out the Parent Evaluation of Student-Led Conferences Form.
- Go to the cafeteria to review more of your child's work and to visit with the counselors.

"The student-led conference is the **best** student-success building tool that has come along in a long time. Nothing can take the place of having the student, parent, and teacher face-to-face, as a unified team, to encourage a student to bigger and better heights. No matter where the student is academically, the student-led conference boosts that student forward!"

—M. A. Wrenn, Parent

6 Teachers

Goals of Student-Led Conferences:

- To encourage students to accept responsibility for their learning
- To teach students to evaluate their academic performance
- To engage the parent, the student, and the teacher in honest dialogue
- To increase parent participation at conference time

Teacher Responsibilities:

Most of the teacher's responsibilities occur before the student-led conference takes place. The following is a list of things that teachers should do prior to the conference.

- Train students on student-led conferencing. The teacher should role play with the student how a student-led conference should be conducted.
- Give all students time to practice. The more practice they have, the more confident they will be during the conference.
- Provide ample time for students to get their folders and notebooks together before the conference.
- Notify parents of the new conferencing format. The parents should know that their child will be leading the conference. Send home the parent handout on student-led conferences.
- Be sure to send a Confirmation Form home to the parents within 24 hours of the conference.
- Each team will complete the Time Schedule Form for confirmed conference times.

During the Conference:

- Refer to the Teacher Suggestions for Conference Form. It emphasizes that teachers **do not talk!**
- Encourage the student to keep focused on his or her checklist.
- When you have conversation, be positive and supportive, emphasizing the things the student has accomplished. Keep focused on the Standards.
- Remind parents to go to the cafeteria to review more of their student's work after the conference.
- Encourage parents to fill out Evaluation forms.

After the Conference:

1. Were my students prepared?
2. Was I positive with the parents?
3. Did I think the conferences were effective?
4. What might I have done differently?
5. Was it worth the time and preparation?

"Student-led conferences encourage students to come out of their shells and take a lead role. They prepare students for being able to speak in front of others."

—D. Drane, Parent

Questions and Answers

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Questions from Parents

1. Can I see all of my child's teachers?

One of your child's teachers will be at the conference. If it is necessary to meet with another teacher or all of the team teachers, you can schedule an additional appointment.

2. Why do I need to go if my child is doing well in school?

Student-led conferences benefit all students, whether they are struggling, excelling, or somewhere in between. Because of the many benefits to students, all of Conway's students are expected to participate.

3. I can't get time off work. What do I do?

The student-led conference schedule runs from morning to evening hours. It is important to try to have your conference on the designated day, but you may schedule another day if necessary.

4. What can I do if I find out my child needs help?

While in the cafeteria to review your child's work, you may speak with the school counselor or the Youth Services Center coordinator. You also may enroll your child in Extended School Services (ESS) or get information on other available programs.

Questions from Teachers

1. How long will it take for me to prepare for student-led conferences?

It will take you several hours to prepare, especially the first time the conferences are implemented. However, once you have completed your responsibilities, you can relax.

2. What happens to those parents and students who do not show?

Contact the parent to reschedule. If unsuccessful, give the parent's name to the Youth Services Center to contact.

3. What if the parent wants to speak with another teacher other than the one at the conference?

Encourage that parent to set up a conference at a later date with that teacher.

4. How long should each conference last?

It is recommended that each conference last 20 minutes. The first 10 minutes will be led completely by the student. The remainder of the time can be used for you to answer questions or to share information with the parent.

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Questions from Students

1. How will I know what to do?

Your teacher will explain all steps of the student-led conference and will help you prepare for it. You will have a chance to practice in your classroom before the actual conference.

2. Why do I have to talk about Standards?

Standards show what all students are expected to learn. It's important for you to know what is expected of you and to be able to talk to your parents about it.

3. Do I have to be in dress code for the student-led conference?

You do not have to wear uniform dress to the conference.

If you like to surf, the Internet has unlimited resources for student-led conferences. Just do a search for *student-led conferences*.

Forms

Form A—Teacher Evaluation Checklist for Conference

The Teacher Evaluation Checklist is completed by the teacher for each student prior to the conference. As an alternative, the teacher may provide a computerized grade sheet. The student shares this information with his/her parents during the conference.

Form B—Student-Led Conference Time Schedule

Teachers complete the Student-Led Conference Time Schedule. The schedule is then used to sign in parents and students as they arrive for their conferences.

Form C—Teacher Suggestions for Conference

The Teacher Suggestions for Conference Form is used by teachers during the conferences as a guide.

Form D—Student Self-Evaluation for Conference

Students complete a Self-Evaluation Form before the conference, listing all their classes. Each student also documents a Self-Improvement Plan at the bottom of the form.

Form E—Student Checklist for Conference

The Student Checklist for Conference is attached to the top of the student's conference folder. The student refers to the list during the conference and checks off each item as it is completed.

Form F—Parent Checklist for Student-Led Conferences

The Parent Checklist for Student-Led Conferences Form is given to parents prior to conferences and is available on Conference Day.

"I like doing all the talking because I like to talk, and I like to brag about my good work. Getting started is the hardest part. After you get started, everything's fine.

—Stephanie O., Student—Grade Seven

Form A

Teacher Evaluation Checklist for Conference

Teacher Evaluation Checklist for Conference

Student Name: _____

Class: _____

Teacher: _____

Date: _____

- | | Low-----High |
|---|--------------|
| 1. Student is meeting academic standards. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| <hr/> | |
| 2. Student is organized; uses agenda. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| <hr/> | |
| 3. Student works well with peers. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| <hr/> | |
| 4. Student is current with all assignments. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| <hr/> | |
| 5. Student comes prepared each day. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| <hr/> | |
| 6. Student behavior is acceptable. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| <hr/> | |
| 7. Student attendance is good. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| <hr/> | |

Form B

Student-Led Conference Time Schedule

TIME SCHEDULE

Team _____

STUDENT-LED CONFERENCE TIME SCHEDULE

WRITE IN NAMES OF CONFIRMED CONFERENCES

Return to Office by 1:00 PM on _____

TIME	NAME OF STUDENT	NAME OF PARENT
7:00		
7:20		
7:40		
8:00		
8:20		
8:40		
9:00		
9:20		
9:40		
10:00		
10:20		
10:40		
11:00		
11:20		
11:40		
12:00		
12:20		
12:40		

Form C

Teacher Suggestions for Conference

TEACHER SUGGESTIONS FOR CONFERENCE

- 1.) DON'T TALK!! DON'T TALK!!
- 2.) When you do have conversation with parents, emphasize STANDARDS and how the student is making progress toward mastery.
- 3.) When students seem to be struggling, encourage them to keep focused on the checklist, marking off each item as they complete it.
- 4.) Be positive and supportive, emphasizing the things the student has accomplished. Keep focused on the STANDARDS.
- 5.) Remind the parents to go to the cafeteria to review more of their student's work. Remind them to fill out the conference evaluation sheet.

Form D

Student Self-Evaluation for Conference

Student Self-Evaluation for Conference

1. Class: _____ Teacher: _____

2. Class: _____ Teacher: _____

3. Class: _____ Teacher: _____

4. Class: _____ Teacher: _____

5. Class: _____ Teacher: _____

6. Class: _____ Teacher: _____

For the next grading period, my self-improvement plan includes these goals:

1. _____

2. _____

Form E

Student Checklist for Conference

STUDENT CHECKLIST FOR CONFERENCE

_____ Show your agenda to your parents. Discuss which standards you have mastered.

_____ Review the self-evaluation sheet on the top of your conference folder. Explain your evaluation in each class.

_____ Discuss your self-improvement plan and the goals which you have set for yourself.

_____ Share at least one piece of work with your parents. Briefly explain how you met the standard or are still working on it.

_____ Indicate to the teacher that you are ready for them to join you to complete the conference.

_____ Take your parent to the cafeteria and finish reviewing your work. Remind your parents to fill out the evaluation form.

_____ After leaving the cafeteria, place all of your folders in your locker.

Form F

Parent Checklist for Student-Led Conferences

Parent Checklist for Student-Led Conferences

- ✓ Check your child's agenda. It contains information about Standards met and daily assignments.
- ✓ Review your child's self-evaluation sheet. Ask questions of your child if you don't understand something.
- ✓ Let your child discuss their self-improvement plan with you. Encourage them to reach their goals!
- ✓ You should review your child's work during the conference. Ask your student which Standards were being used for the assignment. Ask your child if they thought they had mastered those Standards.
- ✓ After your child has led you and the teacher through the conference, the teacher will answer any questions you might have.
- ✓ Please go to the cafeteria to complete the review of your child's work. Fill out both evaluation forms as you leave. Additional student services are available in the cafeteria if needed.

Glossary

Accountable

Answerable; supposed to be responsible for doing a specific task or job; can be “called to account” for why the task is not done right

Advocate

One who argues in favor of; one who argues for a cause; one who pleads in another’s behalf—the way adults take action on behalf of their children

Assessment

The act of evaluating or appraising; the particular methods used to evaluate how well children are learning

Benchmark Piece

An example of quality student work used as a starting point or guide

CATS

Commonwealth Accountability Testing System; the system of testing used in Kentucky’s public schools to assess a student’s learning

CIPL

Commonwealth Institute for Parent Leadership: The institute is sponsored by the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence and trains parents to work with teachers and other parents to raise academic achievement for all students.

Curriculum

What is taught in a subject during the school year

ESS

Extended School Services (ESS); after-school classroom instruction held at designated times of the year, providing opportunity for a student to raise a failing grade or to improve a grade in a core subject

JCPS

Jefferson County Public Schools

KERA

Kentucky Education Reform Act

Open-Response Question

A question that cannot be answered with a one-word answer; one that requires higher-level thinking skills

Performance Level

The way in which someone or something functions: On the way toward achieving the highest Standard, a student passes through different levels. A student may start off not knowing much, then will learn a little; and then will learn even more; and then, finally, will know enough to say she or he is at the highest level in that subject area. Performance levels help students know how they are doing as they advance toward the highest Standard.

Performance Levels:

Novice—A person new to something; a beginner

Apprentice—A person being taught something; still a beginner

Proficient—Highly competent; skilled; expectation for all Kentucky students to be Proficient by the year 2014

Distinguished—Excellent; outstanding; more than what is expected

Portfolio

A collection of work: Writing portfolios are collections of students' best writing work in different subject areas.

Rubric

A scoring guide for an assignment or test

Standards

A degree or level of requirement, excellence, or attainment. Standards are really a statement about what level of achievement is expected of all students.

Student-Led Conference

A conference in which the student takes ownership for his/her academic performance at school. The student shares with his/her parent what he/she has been working on and leads the discussion.

"You tell your parents what you've been doing in school and about your work. If you get stuck on something, the teachers will help you. It's not that hard."

—Karmen B., Student—Grade Seven

Acknowledgments

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